

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-33. (canceled)

34. (currently amended) A computer implemented method of operating a subscription manager to manage incoming machine readable messages arriving at a communications network having multiple remote user recipients, the method comprising the operations of:

independent of whether incoming messages have originated from a message originator pre-approved by the messages' addressees, the subscription manager determining if incoming messages are subscription type messages, subscription type messages comprising recurring messages multicast to a plurality of addressees who have previously communicated to originators of the messages their intent to receive such messages;
~~examining incoming messages for prescribed attributes indicative of the messages arising due to user recipient subscription to machine-automated services of providing such messages;~~
responsive to finding that a given message is a subscription type message, ~~the prescribed attributes in a given message,~~ the given message having at least one addressee, performing operations comprising:
determining whether the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee for sending subscribed-to messages to the addressee;
if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee;

if the given message did not originate from a subscription source
pre-approved by the given message's addressee, blocking
delivery of the given message to the addressee.

35. (currently amended) The method of claim 34, further comprising:
responsive to determining that a given message is not a subscription type
message, forwarding the given message to its addressee.
~~responsive to absence of the prescribed attributes in a given message,~~
~~forwarding the given message to its addressee regardless of~~
~~whether the given message originated from a subscription source~~
~~pre-approved by the given message's addressee.~~
36. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, the operation of blocking
delivery of the given message comprising at least one of the following:
1) refusing the given message, 2) returning the given message to its
sender, 3) discarding the message, 4) prompting the given
message's addressee for confirmation that the addressee
requested the given message, and only upon receiving the
confirmation, forwarding the given message to the addressee.
37. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, the operation of blocking
delivery of the given message further comprising:
presenting to the given message's addressee an offer of a subscription to
a machine-automated service of providing messages related to the
given message, and only upon receiving acceptance of the offer,
performing operations of:
forwarding the given message to the addressee;
precompleting a subscription activation form and providing the
precompleted form to the addressee;
responsive to the addressee's acceptance of the form, on behalf of
the addressee obtaining from a source of the given message

a subscription to a machine-automated service providing future messages relating to the given message.

38. (currently amended) The method of claim 34, where:
~~the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;~~
the subscription manager is operated remotely by a service provider on behalf of the user recipients;
the operation of blocking delivery of the given message further comprises, only if the ~~prescribed attributes found in the given message~~ includes evidence that the given message originated from a recognized business partner of the service provider, first entity, presenting the addressee with at least one of the following user-activated options: (1) to receive the message, (2) to obtain from a source of the given message a subscription to a machine-automated service providing future messages relating to the given message.
39. (currently amended) The method of claim 34, where:
the subscription manager is operated remotely by a service provider on behalf of the user recipients;
the operations further comprise, apart from messages directed to the user recipients, the service provider receiving from recognized business affiliates of the service provider indicia identifying subscription type messages originating from said business affiliates;
the operation of determining if incoming messages are subscription type messages comprises examining incoming messages for said indicia.
~~the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;~~
~~the operation of examining incoming messages for the prescribed attributes comprising examining incoming messages for evidence~~

~~that the messages originated from recognized business affiliates of the first entity.~~

40. (currently amended) The method of claim 34, where:
~~the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;~~
the subscription manager is operated remotely by a service provider on behalf of the user recipients;
the operations further comprise maintaining a record of machine-readable identifying indicia provided by business affiliates of the service provider ~~first entity~~ and serving to uniquely identify each said business affiliate;
the operation of determining that a given message is a subscription type message ~~the finding of the prescribed attributes in a given message~~ is satisfied by conditions including the given message including any of the identifying indicia.
41. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, where:
the operation of forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises: including with the forwarded given message an indication that the subscription manager has approved the forwarded given message.
42. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, where:
the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises: determining which of the following that the given message pertains to: subscription maintenance or subscription content; making a different presentation of the given message to the addressee depending on whether the message pertains to subscription content or subscription maintenance.

43. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, where the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, the operation of forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:

- determining which of the following that the given message pertains to:
 - subscription maintenance or subscription content;
- only if the given message pertains to subscription maintenance,
 - performing operations comprising:
 - presenting the given message's addressee with a user-activated cancellation message;
 - responsive to activation of the cancellation message, the subscription manager negotiating cancellation of the subscription with the subscription source free of further input by the given message's addressee.

44. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, where the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:

- detecting whether the given message pertains to a new subscription
 - requiring further acts by the addressee to activate the subscription;
 - and if so, negotiating activation of the subscription with the subscription source free of further input by the given message's addressee.

45. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, the operation of determining whether the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee comprising:

- determining whether at least one of the following attributes of the given message matches attributes stored in a subscriptions database:

origination address, alias origination address, proxy destination address, message subject, ID code name, other unique identifier field.

46. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, the messages being of at least one of the following types:

email, instant messaging, telephonic, radio, television, wireless, text, audio, visual, and combinations thereof.

47. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, the operations further comprising:

providing participating users with utilities for abbreviated creation, modification, and cancellation of subscription arrangements.

48. (currently amended) An apparatus for managing incoming machine readable messages arriving at a communications network having multiple remote user recipients, comprising:

a subscription manager programmed to perform computer-executed operations comprising:

independent of whether incoming messages have originated from a message originator pre-approved by the messages' addressees, determining if incoming messages are subscription type messages, subscription type messages comprising recurring messages multicast to a plurality of addressees who have previously communicated to originators of the messages their intent to receive such messages;

~~examining incoming messages for prescribed attributes indicative of the messages arising due to user recipient subscription to machine automated services of providing such messages;~~

responsive to finding that a given message is a subscription type message, ~~the prescribed attributes in a given message~~, the given message having at least one addressee, performing operations comprising:

determining whether the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee for sending subscribed-to messages to the addressee;

if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee;

if the given message did not originate from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, blocking delivery of the given message to the addressee.

49. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is programmed to perform further operations comprising:

responsive to determining that a given message is not a subscription type message, forwarding the given message to its addressee

~~responsive to absence of the prescribed attributes in a given message, forwarding the given message to its addressee regardless of whether the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee.~~

50. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of blocking delivery of the given message comprises at least one of the following:

- 1) refusing the given message, 2) returning the given message to its sender, 3) discarding the message, 4) prompting the given message's addressee for confirmation that the addressee

requested the given message, and only upon receiving the confirmation, forwarding the given message to the addressee.

51. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of blocking delivery of the given message further comprises:

presenting to the given message's addressee an offer of a subscription to a machine-automated service of providing messages related to the given message, and only upon receiving acceptance of the offer, performing operations of:
forwarding the given message to the addressee;
precompleting a subscription activation form and providing the precompleted form to the addressee;
responsive to the addressee's acceptance of the form, on behalf of the addressee obtaining from a source of the given message a subscription to a machine-automated service providing future messages relating to the given message.

52. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 48, where:

~~the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;~~

the subscription manager is operated remotely by a service provider on behalf of the user recipients;

the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of blocking delivery of the given message further comprises, only if ~~the prescribed attributes found in the given message includes~~ evidence that the given message originated from a recognized business partner of the service provider, ~~first entity~~, presenting the addressee with at least one of the following user-activated options: (1) to receive the message, (2) to obtain from a source of the given message a subscription to a machine-automated service providing future messages relating to the given message.

53. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is operated remotely by a service provider on behalf of the user recipients, where apart from messages directed to the user recipients the service provider receives from recognized business affiliates of the service provider indicia identifying subscription type messages originating from said business affiliates;
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of determining if incoming messages are subscription type messages comprises examining incoming messages for said indicia.
~~the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;~~
~~the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of examining incoming messages for the prescribed attributes comprising examining incoming messages for evidence that the messages originated from recognized business affiliates of the first entity.~~
54. (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is operated remotely by a service provider on behalf of the user recipients;
the apparatus further comprises a record of machine-readable identifying indicia provided by business affiliates of the service provider and serving to uniquely identify each said business affiliate;
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of determining that a given message is a subscription type message is satisfied by conditions including the given message including any of the identifying indicia.
~~the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;~~

~~the apparatus further comprises a record of machine readable identifying indicia provided by business affiliates of the first entity and serving to uniquely identify each said business affiliate;~~
~~the subscription manager is programmed such that finding of the prescribed attributes in a given message is satisfied by conditions including the given message including any of the identifying indicia from the record.~~

55. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:
including with the forwarded given message an indication that the subscription manager has approved the forwarded given message.
56. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:
determining which of the following that the given message pertains to: subscription maintenance or subscription content;
making a different presentation of the given message to the addressee depending on whether the message pertains to subscription content or subscription maintenance.
57. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, where the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, the operation of forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:

determining which of the following that the given message pertains to:
subscription maintenance or subscription content;
only if the given message pertains to subscription maintenance,
performing operations comprising:
presenting the given message's addressee with a user-activated
cancellation message;
responsive to activation of the cancellation message, the
subscription manager negotiating cancellation of the
subscription with the subscription source free of further input
by the given message's addressee.

58. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, where the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:

detecting whether the given message pertains to a new subscription
requiring further acts by the addressee to activate the subscription,
and if so, negotiating activation of the subscription with the
subscription source free of further input by the given message's
addressee.

59. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the apparatus further comprises a subscriptions database;

the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of
determining whether the given message originated from a
subscription source pre-approved by the given message's
addressee comprises:
determining whether at least one of the following attributes of the
given message matches attributes stored in the
subscriptions database: origination address, alias

origination address, proxy destination address, message subject, ID code name, other unique identifier field.

60. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, the messages being of at least one of the following types:

email, instant messaging, telephonic, radio, television, wireless, text, audio, visual, and combinations thereof.

61. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is programmed to perform further operations comprising:

providing participating users with utilities for abbreviated creation, modification, and cancellation of subscription arrangements.

62. (previously presented) The method of claim 48, the operations further comprising:

the subscription manager screening outgoing machine readable messages of the user recipients to determine if said message pertain to a subscription;
if message is cancellation, completing and then attaching a prescribed cancel data form to the message;
if message is new subscription, completing and then attaching a prescribed new subscription form to the message;
transmitting the message and any attachments to a subscription source address.

63. (new) A method of managing incoming machine readable messages arriving at a communications services provider for delivery to multiple remote user recipient customers of the communications services provider, where the communications services provider has commercial relationships with one or more affiliates that serve as known originators of subscription messages comprising

messages repeatedly transmitted to multiple addressees that have pre-approved receipt of such subscription messages, the method comprising the operations of:

- apart from messages arriving at the communications services provider for delivery to customers, the communications services provider receiving from each affiliate pre-agreed indicia identifying subscription messages originated by that affiliate;
- responsive to receiving incoming machine readable messages addressed to remotely located user recipient customers of the communications services provider, the communications services provider examining the incoming machine readable messages for presence of the pre-agreed indicia to determine if the message originates with one of the commercial partners;
- responsive to absence of the pre-agreed indicia in a given message, and independent of whether the given message originated with a message originator pre-approved by the given message's addressee for sending subscribed-to messages to the addressee, the communications services provider forwarding the given message to its addressee;
- responsive to presence of the pre-agreed indicia in a given message, the communications services provider determining whether the given message originated from a message originator that is pre-approved by the given message's addressee for sending subscribed-to messages to the addressee;
- if so, forwarding the given message to the addressee;
- if not, blocking delivery of the given message to the addressee.